

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

EB-07 IO-10 OMB-01 DLOS-04 COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01

TRSE-00 /089 W

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R 311950Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9172

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, BL, CI

SUBJ: BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO THE SEA - CHILEAN PROPOSAL
ACCEPTANCE

REF: LA PAZ 8994

1. SUMMARY: CHANCELLOR GUZMAN, IN A PRESS STORY
PUBLISHED ON DECEMBER 31, IS REPORTED TO HAVE STATED
THAT BOLIVIA HAS ACCEPTED THE CHILEAN OFFER OF A
BAND OF TERRITORY NORTH OF ARICA IN PRINCIPLE AND IS
ONLY AWAITING PERUVAIN APPROVAL TO BEGIN THE NEXT
NEGOTIATING STAGE. PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS IN THE
LAST FEW DAYS INDICATE THAT PRESIDENT BANZER IS
ADAMANT ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF ACCEPTING THE PRINCIPLE
OF AN EXCHANGE OF TERRITORY. HE HAS INSISTED THAT
THE PEOPLE WILL DECIDE ON THE CHILEAN PROPOSAL, BUT
VIEWS ARE BEING SOLICITED THROUGH THE MILITARY AND
LABOR LEADERSHIP RATHER THAN BY PLEBISCITE. HOWEVER,
IN REALITY THE PRESIDENT APPEARS TO BE SEEKING ONLY
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A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN AN INTERVIEW ON NATIONAL TELEVISION ON DECEMBER 28, BANZER REPLIED TO QUESTIONS FROM THE DIRECTORS OF MAJOR NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO STATIONS INSISTING THAT A TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE IS THE ONLY VIABLE SOLUTION TO BOLIVIA'S LANDLOCKED SITUATION SINCE CHILE WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY OTHER FORM OF COMPENSATION. HE STATED THAT WHILE THE COST OF BUILDING A PORT IN THE PROJECTED CORRIDOR HAS NOT YET BEEN CALCULATED IT WILL BE HIGH BUT NOT EXORBITANT. HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT PERU WOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE CHILEAN PROPOSAL IN VIEW OF PREVIOUS PRONOUNCEMENTS OF ITS LEADERS AND ESPECIALLY SINCE, TOGETHER WITH ALL THE OTHER SIGNATORIES, IT HAD ADHERED TO THE SECTION OF THE AYACUCHO DECLARATION CALLING FOR A REMEDY TO BOLIVIA'S LANDLOCKED SITUATION.

3. ON DECEMBER 29 BANZER RECEIVED LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL CONFDERATIONS OF RAILROAD WORKERS WHO WISHED TO EXPRESS THE UNION'S SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHILE. NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RAODWORKERS AND OF THE CRAFTSMEN'S UNION HAVE ALSO ENDORSED THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AS HAS THE SMALL DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE PEOPLE WOULD BE ASKED TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON THE ISSUE THROUGH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING UNION LEADERS. THIS METHOD OF CANVASING OPINION HAS BEEN CHOSEN, HE SAID, BECAUSE THE COUNTRY PRESENTLY HAS NO FUNCTIONING CONGRESS AND A PLEBISCITE WOULD TAKE TOO LONG TO ORGANIZE AND COST TOO MUCH TO CARRY OUT. THE GOB HAS CALCULATED THAT SUCH A VOTE WOULD COST FIVE MILLION DOLLARS AND WOULD TAKE EIGHT MONTHS TO ORGANIZE.

4. AGAIN CONFRONTING THE ISSUE OF TERRITORIAL COMPENSATION HE CLAIMED THAT IT IS A BETTER SOLUTION THAN MORTGAGING THE COUNTRY'S PRESENT AND FUTURE BY COMMITTING IT TO LONG TERM ECONOMIC COMPENSATION. HE REMINDED BOLIVIANS AT HOME AND ABROAD THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT CHILE TO GIVE UP ANY OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FRUITS OF ITS VICTORY IN THE 1879 WAR WITHOUT GAINING BENEFITS FOR ITSELF.

5. COMMENT: THE GOB APPEARS DETERMINED TO GIVE CHILE A POSITIVE REPLY. BANZER HAS BEEN ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING FOR HIS POLICY ON TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE AMONG THE MILITARY (REFTEL) AND NOW HE IS TAKING THE ISSUE TO THE UNIONS. HE SEEMS TO HAVE NO DOUBT

OF THIS BEING THE ONLY VIABLE SOLUTION.
KNOWLEDGEABLE PUBLIC OPINION IN LA PAZ, WHILE
GENUINELY IMPRESSED WITH THE CHILEAN OFFER
IS COUNSELLING EXTREME CAUTION ON THE PART OF THE
GOVERNMENT AND THE POPULATION. HOWEVER, IF PERU IS
FORTHCOMING, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE BANZER
GOVERNMENT WILL PROCEED ON THE BASIS OF THE PRESENT
PROPOSITION.
STEDMAN

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